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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 SS-15 NSC-05
SIL-01 LAB-04 FBIE-00 JUSE-00 TRSE-00 L-03 INSE-00
COME-00 EB-08 H-02 /070 W
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FM AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1477
INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MATAMOROS
AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, CGEN, MX
SUBJ: US FARMER PROTESTS AGAINST MEXICAN PRODUCE IMPORTS

REF: MATAMOROS 0030

1. AS WAS REPORTED IN REFTEL, A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION BY US FARMERS AGAINST IMPORTS OF MEXICAN PRODUCE IS BEING ORGANIZED AT NOGALES, ARIZONA. NOGALES IS A MAJOR IMPORTATION AND PROCESSING POINT FOR MEXICAN PRODUCE FROM THE WEST COAST OF MEXICO, CHIEFLY WINTER TOMATOES. THE REPACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCE OUT OF NOGALES, ARIZONA, IS THE PRINCIPAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THIS BORDER COMMUNITY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS.

2. DEMONSTRATIONS ARE REPORTEDLY PLANNED BY PROTESTING FARMERS FROM DISTANT US STATES, WITH PARTICIPANTS FROM NEBRASKA, COLORADO AND GEORGIA MENTIONED ALONG WITH OTHERS FROM TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA. TIMING OF THE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS IS REPORTEDLY STILL UNCERTAIN; THEY MAY BEGIN AS EARLY AS THURSDAY, MARCH 9 IF A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ARE ON HAND AT THAT TIME, BUT MAY BE
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DEFERRED TO MARCH 10 OR 11. ORGANIZERS HAVE ESTABLISHED "COMMAND POST" AT AMERICANA HOTEL, NOGALES, AND A "STAGING AREA" AT WILCOX, ARIZONA, ON INTERSTATE HIGHWAY 10, ONE HUNDRED MILES FROM NOGALES. THIS IS THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARIZONA FARMERS' STRIKE.

3. NOGALES, ARIZONA HAS TWO PRINCIPAL BORDER CROSSING

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STATIONS IN ADDITION TO A PEDESTRIAN GATE. COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC, INCLUDING PRODUCE TRUCKS, ARE INSPECTED AT A COMMERCIAL IMPORT FACILITY APPROXIMATELY ONE MILE WEST OF DOWNTOWN NOGALES, WHICH CONNECTS DIRECTLY WITH INTERSTATE HIGHWAY 19. IT IS AT THIS FACILITY THAT THE PRINCIPAL PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS ARE EXPECTED TO OCCUR.

4. FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF NOGALES, ARIZONA HAVE DECIDED TO AUTHORIZE "ORDERLY" PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS. HOWEVER, SOME FEDERAL OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED THAT DEMONSTRATORS WILL TRY TO PROVOKE SOME VIOLENCE IN ORDER TO FORCE ARRESTS AND THUS GAIN WIDER PUBLICITY FOR THEIR EFFORTS. THE ORGANIZATIONS OF MEXICAN PRODUCE EXPORTERS HAVE INSTRUCTED THEIR MEMBERS TO AVOID ANY PROVOCATION AND TO SUSPEND SHIPMENTS TO THE BORDER UNTIL DEMONSTRATIONS ARE OVER.

5. IF THE BORDER SHUT-DOWN IS BRIEF, AS IS HOPED, THE ECONOMIC IMPACT WILL BE LIMITED. HOWEVER, A MORE PROLONGED SHUT-DOWN WILL RESULT IN CLOSING OF THE NOGALES, ARIZONA PACKING SHEDS AND THE POSSIBLE LAYOFF OF WORKERS. THIS IS STILL THE HEIGHT OF THE PRODUCE IMPORTING SEASON, AND APPROXIMATELY 400 TRAILER TRUCKS OF PRODUCE ARE INSPECTED, ENTERED, AND REPACKED DAILY AT NOGALES. A PART OF THIS IS TRANSSHIPPED THROUGH THE US TO CANADA.

6. THE HARD-CORE PROTESTERS INCLUDE SOME WHO WERE INVOLVED
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IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE DEMONSTRATIONS AND WERE ARRESTED THERE. THIS GROUP IS NOT EXPECTED TO EXCEED 250. HOWEVER, THERE ARE CURRENTLY IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA SEVERAL THOUSANDS OF WINTER VISITOR FARMERS FROM THE COLDER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY WHO ARE SYMPATHETIC. IN ADDITION, NUMEROUS FARMERS FROM THE PHOENIX, ARIZONA AREA ARE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS OR SUPPORTERS. THE PRESS HAS QUOTED THE ORGANIZERS AS SAYING THEY EXPECT TO TURN OUT FIVE THOUSAND DEMONSTRATORS. OFFICIAL SOURCES IN NOGALES, ARIZONA DO NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT UP TO TWO THOUSAND WILL SHOW UP. IT IS BELIEVED THAT PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS MAY LAST TWO DAYS, I.E., MARCH 9-10, OR MARCH 10-11. THE ORGANIZERS REPORTEDLY HAVE INDICATED THAT DURING THIS PERIOD THEY CAN ACHIEVE THEIR GOAL OF NATIONWIDE PUBLICITY. THEY WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO REPORT TO THE AMERICAN FARMING COMMUNITY THAT THEIR EFFORTS WILL HAVE RESULTED IN KEEPING 800 TRUCK-LOADS OF MEXICAN PRODUCE FROM THE US MARKET.

7. THE PROTEST ORGANIZERS HAVE PUBLICIZED ALLEGED DANGER TO US POPULATION OF DDT SPRAYED MEXICAN PRODUCE. US AUTHORITIES AT THE BORDER CONFIRM TO US THAT NO SUCH PRODUCTS ARE PERMITTED TO ENTER THE US.

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Message Attributes

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